

Rome. 27th October. 1823.

My dear Richards,

Your wife's illness gave me considerable uneasiness in the first part of your letter; however as I went on, the anxiety went off, and I am happy to be able to congratulate her and you on her recovery. We saw L Hunt at Florence, where, on our return from Venice, we staid no more than three days. He and the children are all well, and Mrs Hunt is considerably better, thanks to the little Genovese she bears at her bosom. It was a joyful meeting for L H and Severn, and we all chatted of and concerning our old friends in England as prodigiously as you can imagine. One day I offered, half joke and half earnest, to take his son John (my favourite) to Rome, and the offer was accepted, so here I have him. L H however first insisted on telling me all his bad qualities, leaving me at liberty to refuse to take him. The list was a very long one; enough to startle one; yet I had formed so good an opinion of the boy's heart, that I did not allow his faults to sway me in the least. He was plainly too much both for father and mother to manage, distressed them daily, hourly, by his conduct, and as he had lost all pretence to a good character at home, there was no hope for him. His father said that to be relieved of him for half a year would make the family happy, though, at the same time, he could not endure that another should be tormented, and therefore he said his worst of him, "and now, Mr Brown, do as you please, take him or leave him." John has now been with us, including the journey, exactly three weeks, and his worst qualities are either destroyed or concealed. He is most anxious to earn a good name. We have had one dire struggle, when, finding he must yield, he did so with so pleasant a grace that I could scarce forbear laughing; and since that time he has never once attempted to contend. He is only 11 years old, and, if I mistake not, his talents are considerable. L H has, I believe, taken a house two miles from Florence; in the spring I shall take another in his neighbourhood, and sit down to teach my Carlo English. I had a letter four days since from Pisa, giving, as usual, the best account of his little workshop. Severn sends his friendship to you and yours; we keep house together, and I am head-work; you cannot imagine how well I succeed in soup, steak, soups, stews, hashes, vegetables, boils and roasts. I have just now a soup cooking at the fire, and though I say it that ought not, it will be most extraordinarily excellent. We get up at about 1/2 past 6, dine at 1, and sup at 8, and go to bed at 10; is not this in the right vein? The curious fact of my committing six blunders in spelling in one letter does not in the least surprise me. On that point I know myself tolerably well; and I'll not be at the pains to refer to a Dictionary for your sake, till you turn Editor, and pay me handsomely for my articles. But why were you so touchy about my translating "paradiso"? Was not the letter was to be read by Dilke, who cannot afford to be provoked with

outlandish jargon? As for yourself, an admirable Italian scholar no doubt, I never shall think of translating for you, - *Angio, caro lei; mi fa piacere a lasciar i matthi in loro bejo*. Severn, who has a vile trick of mingling the two languages, when he pretends to speak English, goes on in a style that you may understand, but it would puzzle many a one. "Now, *Signor Brown, guardi mi po'* at my Alexander's *scudo*. *Diavolo mi ponde* if I make it a *scudaccio*!" - but I can't please myself about the *figure*. *Viene qui*, let's have a look at the *costume* of *Costanza*"; (Flores costumed); "*eccò!* what think you of *questo*? Come here? *Pare a me bravo affai*, but how do you *piace* it? Who's knocking at the *porta*? O, the *foraggi* with *paniotti*, - Brown, you must come out with your *Carocelli*." - Severn, Severn, when will you learn to speak English, - *dearly and truly?* - "*Ah! che cosa!* *Scusi, Signor Carlo*, I will, indeed I will, correct my *lingua*, - I have certainly got into a very bad *abitudine*." You must know that, taking this fault in Severn, I think him quite a perfect fellow. He has a generous way of thinking on all occasions and an independence of spirit that I seldom saw equalled. He looks very well, - I think younger than he did in England. As for his painting, I may be too partial to speak of it properly, - let *that* (and I fear not the trial) speak for itself. He has a twelvemonth to come of pensioning from the Academy; and has no idea of leaving Italy at the end of the term. I have to pass, continually, the house, nay, under the very window, where Keats died. This to me is a stronger memorial of his death than his grave. You ask me for my feelings and observations at his grave, - I saw it, rather from a distance, as the keeper of the ground was absent, with no feeling whatever. A grave never affects me; the living man was a stranger to it, and it only contains a clod like itself. One single circumstance of his life, brought to my mind by a trifle that he loved or hated, affects me always, - but not mournfully, - quite the contrary. I have taught myself to think with pleasure of his having been alive and ^{been} my friend, - not with sorrow at his death. This I dare own. It is that state of mind which I am convinced every man can acquire, and if ^{he} loves happiness, let him do it as quickly as possible. If your eternal sorrowers think it very odd in me, - why, - I'm an odd fellow, you know, - and so let the argument end. I am glad to hear that Dilke has articulated in the *New Monthly*; now he has put his foot in it I have some hopes. You will laugh to hear that I think when he passed thro' Pessica from Genoa, wanted to find out the shop where my "*bella Taba-cia*" lives. He believed in every item of the story. How I chuckled to find I had taken in the knowing one! When I told him that it was entirely a fiction from the first line to the last, - "*Indeed!*" growth he, "then you permit yourself to be called a Gentleman that tells - that is - that is not deserving of credit." It amused Severn, when I read it to him, but at that I was not surprised, - and Severn was very angry it was not true. But how curiously circumstances sometimes fit together: when I had just concluded that part about a Pisan student holding a knife to a woman's throat, an Italian gentleman entered my room, and presently came out with - "*Shocking*"

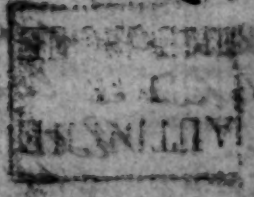
news from Pisa, Sir, - a young student there has murdered a woman in her
bed for her money. Now I had mentioned ^{at Pisa} my story to my young friend
Giannotti, a Pisan student, and he gravely told me I had no right to
suppose any one of his fellows could be guilty of so cowardly & atrocious
an act, - was not the coincidence a strange one? Some may imagine
my story had got wind in the University, and put the murder in the
young villain's head! While in Rome I shall buy all the good engravings
I can lay my hands on for my modicum of money. They are to be picked
up here and there. When weary of them, or in want of cash, I must sell
them again, - and really good engravings are always saleable, especially
in England, and the enormous duty is now taken off. I have just
purchased a book containing 191 ^{large and small} of Wierotter's engravings for
£3.15/- . How is Wierotter estimated in England? Severn says he
thinks such a work, with good impressions, such as mine are, would
be a ten-guinea affair without any trouble. They are the most
beautiful landscapes, and bits of landscapes, you can conceive, and they
do not average so much as 5 each. Are Piranesi's works still much
sought after? I must buy some, - they are glorious prints, full of
poetry and lies. The modern style of engraving in Italy is as hard
as the copper, the artists might copy Ben West tolerably, but their
copies of Raphael &c are intolerable, - they have no idea of an
indefinite line, and, vain fools! they insist on making some cursed
alterations in light or shade, or something they cannot understand.
You will be surprised to hear that Italian painters make
no use of their fine old masters; they boast of them, and
expatiate on their excellence by note, - they never profit
from them. They are fully persuaded the modern school
is the best, in imitation of the French, whose school they follow
with obedient heads. In professed copies from Titian or Raphael
they lay on their positive blues & reds, while the originals are
entirely painted in mixed colours, and tell you the originals are
faded, - this is incomprehensible. It is needless to say they have
a poor opinion of English art, which certainly emulates the old
masters. - I see this letter is determined to be a chit chat one, so
I can't help it. - I despatched a long letter to Dilke from Florence, and
one to Mancus from Venice. Pity upon it Lord Byron behaved most
shamefully to L. Hunt. I would not say so, were I not assured of it.
Nor has his lordship confined his ill conduct to L. alone, but he
has shown himself unfeeling and unjust to others. I leave, thank
Heaven! nothing to do with him, for you may truly parody Butler,
"Ah, me! what perils do environ
The man that meddles with Lord Byron."

I could excuse his frivolity and witfulness, but his bad heart, which
I never believed in, I neither can nor will excuse. Soon, I prophesy, you
will hear of his being sorely sick of the Greeks, and perhaps of behaving
shabbily about his own subscription, - in fact, I leave something to
whereas to leave my prophesy. You may drink as much ale, grog, and
port as you please, only allow me not to touch one of them, but to
swallow wine by tumblers full at 3. 2 1/2 of bottle. When I return to
England the loss of these delicious small wines will be a sad misfortune.

When does Taylor intend to publish a life of Taylor? Is it known? I have just despatched an article to L. H. but don't know when or where it may be printed, for perhaps the Indicator may not last. If Colburn would believe with decency, he would always be a dernier resort, - yes, if possible, I will still write in company with L. H., as he knows me and I know him, which makes the labour a less labour, with no misgivings. I'm an admirable plot for a novel, or a Romance, - what you will, - the scene in Italy. I flatter myself I am waiting for some histories, to serve as pegs for my story. It is an awful thing to write the first paragraph of three or four volumes. Now am I fixed on the particular style, - yes, the style will be in my matter of fact method of telling lies for truth, - but the manner of it, the



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mode of telling and conducting it is the puzzle, and I wish to strike out something original in this way. Give my love to your wife, & Tom, & Sophy, & Miss Sidney for his godfather's sake, & make a bow to Miss Harriet Richards, at full length, just as if it came from me. Why could you not fill up this part of your letter? And what did you mean by "really I cannot find any thing more to say, and so &c"? Now to pernick you, I won't say a word more, except that I am,

ever yours sincerely,
 Chas. Brown.
 30th Oct. 1843.

